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ABSTRACT

Interest has recently focused on group polarization as a function of attitude processes. Several recent reviewers have challenged polarization researchers to integrate the explanations of polarization to existing theories of attitude change. This review suggests that there exists a clear similarity between the social comparison and persuasive arguments explanation and the central and peripheral routes to persuasion in the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). Previous dual process models of polarization are shown to be consistent with this perspective. Suggestions for future research and methodological considerations are highlighted. (Fifth-one references are attached.) (Author)

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Polarization and Persuasion: Integrating the Elaboration Likelihood Model With Explanations of Group Polarization

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Polarization and Persuasion: Integrating the Elaboration Likelihood Model With Explanations of Group Polarization

Abstract

Interest has recently focussed on group polarization as a function of attitude processes. Several recent reviewers have challenged polarization researchers to integrate the explanations of polarization to existing theories of attitude change. This review suggests that there exists a clear similarity between the social comparison and persuasive arguments explanations of polarization and the central and peripheral routes to persuasion in the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). Previous dual process models of polarization are shown to be consistent with this perspective Suggestions for future research and methodological considerations are highlighted.

The 1980's have seen a dramatic increase in interest in small group communication, evidenced by several volumes regarding varying aspects of small group processes (Brandstatter, Davis, & Stocker-Kreichgauer, 1982; Hastie, Penrod, and Pennington, 1983; Hendrick 1987a, 1987b; Kahan & Rapaport, 1984; Paulus, 1980; 1983; Phillips and Wood, 1984). One area where this resurgence has been most evident is small group decision making, including group polarization and the choice shift (nee risky shift). The choice shift is a group level phenomenon representing the difference between the average of group member's initial preferences and the group's final decision. These shifts are predicted to be in the same direction as the initial preferences. Group polarization (an individual level phenomenon), on the other hand, according to Kaplan and Miller (1983), is ". . . an increase in extremity of the average response of individuals in the group, in the same direction as initial responses" (p. 67).[1]

Although polarization was born a risk-taking phenomenon, it is now generally considered representative of a more general attitude change process. Several recent reviewers (e.g., Isenberg, 1986; Kaplan, 1987) have charged polarization researchers with the task of integrating polarization with other attitude change phenomenon. For example, Isenberg (1986) concluded his review of the polarization literature by asking "How can group polarization phenomenon be related to attitude change processes in general?" (p. 1150). The purpose of this review is to present one answer to Isenberg's question. In providing this answer, explanations of polarization will be discussed and integrated with the Elaboration Likelihood Model of persuasion (or ELM; Petty and Cacioppo 1981, 1986a, 1986b). In addition, dual process models of polarization will be discussed in terms of the ELM, directions for

future research, and methodological considerations will be presented.

Mechanisms of Influence in Groups

Deutsch and Gerard (1955) suggested that there were two major mechanisms creating attitude change within small groups; informational influence and normative influence. Normative influence occurs when a person changes their attitudes, values, or behaviors in an attempt to act correctly. Deutsch and Gerard (1955) define normative influence as ". . . an influence to conform with the positive expectations of others" (p. 629). That is, when one succumbs to normative influence they do so in order to receive a reward, or to avoid alienation, from another or others.

Informational influence, on the other hand, occurs when a change in attitudes, values or behaviors occurs in response to information that one receives from other sources. Deutsch and Gerard define informational influence ". . . as an influence to accept information obtained from another as evidence about reality" (p. 629), attributing attitude change ". . . to incorporation of relevant arguments, or information about the judged object, which are shared between discussants" (Kaplan and Miller, 1983, p. 66).

A good deal of interest in polarization has centered upon developing explanations for the phenomenon. Although many explanations have been suggested, only two remain (Lamm & Myers, 1978; Pruitt, 1971). These two, social comparison and persuasive arguments, parallel the mechanisms of influence suggested by Deutsch and Gerard (1955). In addition, it will be shown that these explanations are consistent with the routes to persuasion in the ELM.

Social comparison. The social comparison explanation of polarization comports closely to Deutsch and Gerard's (1955) normative influence. The

social comparison explanation predicts that group members want to be perceived in the most favorable light possible (Festinger, 1954). According to this explanation persons will change their attitude in a socially desirable direction, that is, toward the group norm.

The social comparison explanation of group polarization is most typically discussed in one of two versions. In the first of these explanations, a person advocates a less extreme position than they actually hold to avoid appearing deviant. In making the judgement of what opinion to present, members incorrectly judge the group norm. Through the course of the discussion, group members determine the true norm (indicating that others are more extreme) thereby releasing the person from their fear of deviancy. Release from this fear of deviancy allows expression of their true attitude. Isenberg (1986) refers to this explanation as the pluralistic ignorance explanation, where a person is caught between the desire to present a position as close as possible to one's ideal and the desire to avoid appearing deviant.

In the second version of the social comparison explanation, members vie with one another in order to present the 'optimal' position. In this case, persons are motivated to be distinct and different from other group members in the desired direction and amount. When the group norm becomes apparent, members 'improve' their ratings in order to make themselves seem more desirable to the other group members. This second discussion of social comparison explanation has group members caught between the competing forces of self-enhancement and humility (Isenberg, 1986).

Persuasive arguments. The persuasive arguments explanation comports closely to Deutsch and Gerard's (1955) informational influence. The

persuasive arguments explanation attributes influence to ". . . the information that is exchanged during the course of the discussion" (Miller, 1978, p. 304). The persuasive arguments explanation asserts that for each discussion topic there is a pool of arguments. In evaluating any set of alternatives, persons will generate a number of arguments namely ideas, images, or thoughts describing the attributes of the response alternatives (Burnstein, 1982). Prior to discussion, each group member will generate a subset of these arguments, however, the entire pool of arguments is not totally shared by group members. During group discussion, these arguments are presented to the group as a whole. Attitude change is a function of the position and persuasiveness of the novel arguments presented in the discussion (Vinokur and Burnstein, 1978).

Evidence Supporting Polarization Explanations

A thorough review of the literatures supporting these explanations would be both tedious and redundant since they have been thoroughly, competently, and repeatedly reviewed (e.g., Cartwright, 1971; Dion, Baron, and Miller, 1970; Isenberg, 1986; Lamm and Myers, 1978; Myers, 1982; Myers and Lamm, 1976). What will be reviewed is the literature attempting to distinguish between the social comparison and persuasive explanations of the shifts. This review was performed by Isenberg (1986), who uncovered considerable evidence supporting both explanations.

Social comparison. The social comparison explanation posits knowledge of the other group member's opinions is all that is required for attitude change to occur. Much of the evidence for social comparison explanation comes from 'mere exposure' studies where attitudes are measured following disclosure of members' attitudes (e.g., Baron & Roper, 1976; Teger & Pruitt, 1967). If the

social comparison explanation is accurate, disclosure of opinions should generate normative pressures, creating shifts in attitude in the direction of the group norm.

Reviews of the mere exposure literature generally conclude that shifts are small or nonexistent (e.g., Burnstein and Vinokur, 1973; Kaplan and Miller, 1983). In metaanalyzing these studies, however, Isenberg reports that exposure to other's opinions are significantly and consistently related to attitude change (the mean correlation across 24 studies was +.44). That is, group members exposed to the attitudes of other group members exhibit greater attitude change toward the group norm than those not exposed. Thus, shifts in attitude following exposure to others' attitudes although small, are apparently very consistent.

These mere-exposure studies, however, did not investigate group discussion. That is, group members did not discuss issues, rather simply disclosed their opinions. Relative to engaging in a group discussion, these mere exposure studies subjects were not to exert much cognitive effort. Since no group discussion was performed, subjects did not have to generate arguments to support their position.

Persuasive arguments. Isenberg (1986) also reports substantial evidence supporting the persuasive arguments explanation. Specifically, Isenberg posits that the persuasive arguments explanation has been supported in three ways. First, there is a correlation between the preponderance of arguments in any 'item pool' and the extent of polarization on that item (i.e., the correlational hypothesis). Second, the direction and extent of polarization can be influenced by manipulating the preponderance of pro and con arguments processed by group members (i.e., the causal hypothesis). Finally, it has

been argued that the persuasive arguments explanation is a necessary and sufficient condition for polarization whereas social comparison is neither necessary nor sufficient for shifts to occur (i.e., the exclusivity hypothesis).

The correlational hypothesis is tested by having one group generate as many arguments as possible supporting all response alternatives for a particular set of cases. A number of other groups discuss the same items. The mean persuasiveness of the arguments generated by the first group is compared with the average shifts resulting from the group discussions. Isenberg reports correlations ranging from +.51 and +.86 between the preponderance of arguments possessed by group members and the direction and extent of postdiscussion polarization.

Second, data supporting the causal hypothesis have been generated from those studies where arguments are supplied to group members. In this case, arguments are provided to group members. In these studies, the proportion of arguments supplied to group members has been found to correlate highly with the direction and extent of polarization.

Finally, the exclusivity hypothesis has been tested in many fashions. Vinokur and Burnstein (1978) argued that persuasive arguments explanations and social comparison explanations make similar predictions <u>except</u> when two subgroups, each with a different preference, attempt to make a decision. Social comparison, in this case, predicts that group members will compare themselves with others within their own subgroup, thereby causing depolarization between subgroups.

Vinokur and Burnstein (1978) created two subgroups who supported different alternatives in choice dilemma items. Subgroups discussed issues

until consensus was reached. Data indicate both an overall choice shift as well as depolarization between subgroups. Vinokur and Burnstein (1978) posit that these results are clearly consistent with persuasive arguments and clearly inconsistent with social comparison processes. Isenberg (1986) disagrees, arguing instead that members of subgroups may not have been different enough to cause comparison only within one's subgroup.

The conclusion drawn from this literature is that a vast majority of the research reviewed which utilized group discussion is consistent with informational influence theories of small group decision making (i.e., persuasive arguments). In contrast, when support for normative influence is found, it is in situations where no discussion is involved.

Central and Peripheral Routes to Persuasion

There is a long history of competitiveness between advocates of social comparison and persuasive arguments explanations. A more recent, conciliatory, position is that both informational and normative influence do occur, however under different conditions (e.g., Boster and Mayer, 1984; Isenberg, 1986). This position that both types of influence occur parallels several models of persuasion. Specifically, several theorists have posited that persuasive messages are processed in one of two distinct fashions (Chaiken, 1980; Chaiken and Stangor, 1987; Eagly and Chaiken, 1984; Petty and Cacioppo, 1981; 1986a, b; Stiff, 1986). That is, these models suggest that there exist two complimentary processes which generate attitude change in persuasive contexts. This two-dimensional system is best exemplified by the ELM (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981, 1986a, 1986b).

The ELM posits that there are two ways that a person could choose to process a persuasive message; the central and peripheral routes to

persuasion. The central route to persuasion implies that recipients systematically evaluate message content. When centrally processing recipients exert considerable cognitive effort evaluating message arguments and the extent to which they agree or disagree with the arguments. The central route to persuasion ". . . emphasizes the information that a person has about the attitude object or issue under consideration" (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981, p. 255). Attitude change, in this route, is considered a function of the direction and extent of issue-related thinking about the message.

In the ELM's peripheral route to persuasion, recipients are expected to focus not on message characteristics, but rather on the source of the message or the persuasive context itself. When taking the peripheral route, recipients are expected to exert relatively little cognitive effort. The information processed in this route is easily accessible, such as source credibility and/or attractiveness, the number of arguments presented, and so on (Stiff, 1986). Persuasion in the peripheral route is dependent upon the positive or negative cues associated with the message.

Given the ELM and other theoretical formulations (e.g., Chaiken, 1980; Stiff, 1986), the difference between the central and peripheral routes ". . . has to do with the extent to which the attitude change that results from a message is due to active thinking about either the issue or object-relevant information provided by the message" (Petty and Cacioppo, 1981, p. 256). Petty and Cacioppo (1986a) suggest that many theories of attitude change can be placed onto the elaboration likelihood continuum. Social comparison and persuasive arguments explanations seem to fit quite well at the ends of this continuum. Specifically, the social comparison explanation stands at the peripheral end of the continuum while the persuasive arguments

explanations stands at the central end of the elaboration likelihood continuum.

The major premise of this paper is that there exists a strong parallel between the sources of influence in small group decision making and the central and peripheral routes to persuasion. The persuasive arguments explanation presumes that persons are persuaded by the direction and strength of the arguments presented in the course of the discussion. This type of influence strongly parallels the central route to persuasion where group members exert considerable cognitive effort in evaluating messages. Normative influence (i.e., social comparison) theories assert that group members exert relatively little cognitive processing of discussion content. In such a case, group members do not evaluate the merits of the discussion itself, rather, evaluate noncontent cues such as source status, credibility, and/or attractiveness of the group members who argue. This type of processing is consistent with the peripheral route to persuasion since group members simply associate messages with positive or negative referents.

Since it is possible that the ELM may provide valuable insight into the processes of polarization, an important task is to determine what influences elaboration likelihood. Fortunately, on this point Petty and Cacioppo (1986a) are quite clear. "The likelihood of elaboration will be determined by a person's motivation and ability to evaluate the communication presented" (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986a, p. 8). That is, when a person is both motivated and able to process message content, they are expected to take the central route to persuasion. When either (or both) motivation or ability are low, the recipient is expected to take the peripheral route to persuasion.

If the ELM is to provide a useful means of studying group polarization,

it should shed interesting new light on this literature. Recently a set of studies have supported both persuasive arguments and social comparison explanations, suggesting a dual process model of polarization, where both argument and comparison processes occur, but under different sets of conditions. These studies will be reviewed in discussed in terms of group members' motivation and ability to elaborate. It is the purpose of this review to investigate the extent to which these studies support that contention that increasing motivation and ability influence active processing of discussion content.

The ELM and Dual Process Models

A study which suggested a dual process model of persuasion was performed by Laughlin and Earley (1982). Laughlin and Earley argued that group decision making tasks can be broken down into two categories or types; judgemental and intellective. "An intellective task involves a demonstrably correct solution, whereas a judgemental task involves group consensus on some nondemonstrable behavioral, ethical, aesthetic or attitudinal judgement" (Laughlin and Earley, 1982, p. 273).

Laughlin and Earley (1982) attempted to isolate the Social Decision Schemes used in intellective and judgemental tasks. Social Decision Schemes represent different means by which distributions of individual opinions are combined into group decisions. Many decision schemes have been developed each with a different set of assumptions regarding the nature of the group process (see, e.g., Davis, 1982; Davis, Kerr, Atkin, Holt, & Meek, 1975; Laughlin and Earley, 1982). For example, the majority-wins decision rule assumes that normative influence occurs. In this case, the majority is depicted as being able to place social pressure on the minority in order to force them to

conform, regardless of the arguments supporting either position. Truth-wins schemes, on the other hand, presume that informational influence will occur. In this case, whenever one person advocates the 'correct' solution the remaining group members will recognize the 'correctness' of the solution and adopt it as the group's decision.

Since judgemental tasks involve judgements on ethical and other dimensions, Laughlin and Earley (1982) predicted that for judgemental tasks a majority wins model will predict group decisions (utilizing either a 1/2 or 2/3 majority). A truth-supported wins model will predict group decisions for intellective tasks since these tasks have demonstrably correct solutions. Their results were consistent with these predictions.

Boster and Hale (1988) argue that judgemental and intellective tasks differ in ambiguity. Intellective tasks contain demonstrably correct solutions, therefore, in discussing intellective tasks the optimal course of actions is easily determined (i.e., the task is unambiguous). Judgemental tasks, on the other hand, do not have demonstrably correct solutions, therefore, in the course of a group discussion the optimal course of action is less assessable (i.e., the task is ambiguous). Similarly, Kaplan (1987) argues that intellective tasks are "argument rich" (i.e., there are a large number of novel arguments in the argument pool) while judgemental tasks are argument poor (i.e., there are few novel arguments in the pool).

Response Scale Ambiguity. Boster, Hale, and their associates (Boster and Hale, 1988; Boster, Hale, Mongeau, & Hale, 1984) extended their analysis to produce an ambiguity moderated dual process model of group polarization. Ambiguity, according to Boster and Hale (1988), lies not only in group tasks, but in measurement techniques as well. In most polarization studies,

respondents are asked to read a choice dilemma (CD) item, and asked to indicate the odds of the risky course of action being successful before they would attempt it. Previous research (Reingen, 1976; Reingen & Kernan, 1977) indicates that subjects have difficulties translating their opinions of risk or caution to the odds of success scale. Reingen found that when asked which of two responses were more risky, 30% of subjects' judgements were in error. Under similar conditions, Reingen and Kernan (1977) found a 20% error rate.

As Boster et al. (1984) note, this is an unhealthy state of affairs since a vast majority of polarization studies use this odds-of-success scale. Boster and Hale argue that if 30 percent of subjects misunderstand the response scale that apparent choice shifts can occur by subjects "correcting" their initial opinion. Therefore, Boster and Hale investigated the impact of response scale ambiguity on polarization. That is, they compared the traditional odds of success scale with a modified Likert scale designed to measure opinions toward choice shift items (Fraser, Gouge, and Billig, 1971).

Boster et al. (1984) found that respondents completing the odds-of-success scale made more errors (32%) than respondents completing a revised Likert-type format (8%). In addition, Boster and Hale (1988) investigated the impact of response scale ambiguity on attitudes. Subjects were asked to respond to either a risky or a cautious item on either the odds of success scale or the modified Likert scale. In addition, normative information was provided in the form of fictitious subjects' responses. The normative information was either in the risky or cautions direction. Boster and Hale predicted that under conditions of high response ambiguity, normative information would have an influence on subjects opinions. Since subjects have difficulty determining the response which most clearly matches their opinion,

they will focus on the majority information. Under conditions of low response ambiguity, respondents are likely to base their attitudes on the information in the item (i.e., subjects responding to the risky item are predicted to indicate more risky opinions than those responding to the cautious item).

Results of their investigation are consistent with these predictions. Items (either cautious or risky) had significant influence on attitudes when the response scale was unambiguous. When the response scale was ambiguous, however, normative information significantly influenced opinions. Moreover, under conditions of low response ambiguity, the effect of the item was larger than the effect of the normative information, while the opposite pattern occurred under cognitions of high ambiguity.

The common thread running between Laughlin and Earley (1982) and Boster and Hale investigations is ambiguity. In the ELM, ambiguity influences one's ability to process a persuasive message. Under conditions of high ambiguity, group members would be less able to clearly argue the issue, leading to lower elaboration likelihood. Given this analysis, both Laughlin and Earley's (1982) and Boster and Hale's results can be recast in terms of the routes to persuasion. That is, with intellective tasks (or unambiguous response scales) group members took the central route to persuasion while when discussing judgemental tasks (or unambiguous response scales), group members are expected to take the peripheral route to persuasion.

Majority and Perceptions of Argument Quality. An additional study which suggested a dual process model of polarization was performed by Boster and Mayer (1984). Rather than have subjects engage in a group discussion, Boster and Mayer exposed subjects to a transcript of a (fictitious) group discussion. Position of the majority (risky or cautious) and the strength of

risky and cautious arguments were orthoginally manipulated in these transcripts. Boster and Mayer (1984) report that subjects accurately perceived the position advocated by the majority of group members, however, did not accurately perceive the strength of either risky or cautious arguments. Boster and Mayer instead found that perception of the majority influenced the perception of argument strength for both the risky and cautious arguments. Specifically, majority arguments were consistently perceived as being stronger than minority arguments.

In this investigation, however, majority arguments always preceded minority arguments, confounding majority position with order of presentation. Thus, it was unclear whether Boster and Mayer's results were due to the majority effect or an order effect (i.e., a primacy effect). Since research has shown robust primacy effects (e.g., Asch, 1946; see also Anderson, 1981), Mongeau and Garlick (in press) replicated Boster and Mayer's work while also varying the order of presentation of majority and minority arguments. Specifically, Mongeau and Garlick orthoginally manipulated the majority position, order of presentation of majority and minority positions, and strength of majority and minority arguments.

Mongeau and Garlick's (1988) results indicate that subjects did accurately perceived the majority and both argument strength manipulations. Subjects did <u>not</u> base their perceptions of argument strength on majority position. Instead, manipulations of argument strength exerted a strong influence on perceptions of argument strength.

There is an inconsistency between Boster and Mayer (1984) and Mongeau and Garlick (1988) even though they were very few methodological differences between studies. In the former investigation, subjects used social comparison

information on which to base their perceptions of persuasive argument information. In the latter investigation, on the other hand, subjects differentiated social comparison from persuasive argument information.

One difference between studies which may have caused the differences in results was the length of the transcripts. Boster and Mayer (1984) report their transcripts as being one and one-quarter pages in length. In this case, subjects could not directly directly determine how long the transcript was. Mongeau and Garlick (in press) concluded that since the length of the transcript could not be directly determined, subjects may have been less motivated to actively process message content. Instead, subjects used more easily ascertained information (i.e., majority position) to make their judgements of argument quality. In their own investigation, on the other hand, subjects knew how long the transcript was and were able to accurately gauge how much effort it would take to carefully considered the information in the transcripts, and increasing motivation.

Directions for Future Research

It seems useful to consider the group polarization literature from the perspective of the ELM. First, there seems to be a strong parallel between the explanations for polarization on the one hand, and the routes to persuasion in the ELM. Second, previous dual process models of polarization seem to be exemplars of this more general model of persuasion. That is, these dual process models seem to depend on either motivation or ability to elaborate upon discussion content. In order to be a truly useful perspective, however, the ELM must prove heuristic. That is, the ELM must provide a vehicle for which important characteristics of polarization are discovered.

Obviously, the starting point for these investigations should be group

member's motivation and ability to engage in effortful thinking about discussion content. When attempting to vary group member motivation to elaborate, the ELM depends most often on the variable of involvement (see Petty and Cacioppo, 1986a). At high levels of involvement, message recipients are expected to take the central route to persuasion. At low levels of involvement, on the other hand, are predicted to take the peripheral route. In a group setting, the ELM would predict greater informational influence as involvement increases.

Given the importance of involvement as an determinant of the route to persuasion recipients will take, it is not surprising that several authors have suggested that involvement may influence polarization in group settings (Boster and Mayer, 1982; Isenberg, 1986; Kaplan, 1987). Isenberg, however, argues that increasing ego-involvement in a topic of discussion should increase normative influence. The primary difference here may be definitional. Isenberg notes that "We would expect capital punishment, feminism, pacifism, and drug usage to be ego-involving, compared to the CDQ scenarios and questions of whether basketball or football is the more interesting spectator sport" (p. 1149). Isenberg's ego-involvement seems to be tapping the extent to which issues are well known or controversial. Similarly, Kaplan (1987) argues that it is in these 'ego involving' topics where the pool of novel arguments is small (i.e., the task is argument poor).

Issue involvement, according to the ELM, however, represents the extent to which the topic of the message or discussion is personally relevant to the recipient or group members. This is quite a different view of involvement. In order to avoid confusion, the label of issue involvement will be used to represent the construct associated with the ELM while ego-involvement will be

used to represent the construct discussed by Isenberg (1986).

There are several instances where issue-involvement could be used as a factor in polarization studies. First, issue-involvement can be used in a replication of the Boster and Hale (1988) investigation. First, will respondents exert more effort in trying to understand the odds of success scale under conditions of high issue-involvement? Will mere exposure effects show up under conditions of high issue-involvement.

A second area where issue-involvement may be an important factor is in determining the nature of the discussion. Specifically, Stasser and Titus (1985, 1987) have found that respondents are more likely to focus on information which is consistent with the group norm. This information dissemination bias may be an example of social loafing and may be eliminated under conditions of high issue issue-involvement.

Another variable which may influence group member's motivation to cognitively process discussion content is group size. Several studies have shown that as group size increases that the discrepancy between the most active member and the other group members increases (e.g. Kadane and Lewis, 1969; Stephan and Mishler, 1952). That is, as group size increases, one person tends to dominate the discussion. The obverse of the increasing dominance of one person is the increasing number of group members who rarely participant. Hastie et al. (1983) note that in 60 percent of juries observed that at least three jurors presented less than 3 percent of all group utterances. It is likely that these non-participators are not exerting the cognitive effort exerted by the persons more vocally active in the discussion. Therefore, as group size increases, normative influence may exert a stronger impact on members, particularly those quiet members.

Methodological Considerations

Given the ELM's heuristic potential, there are important methodological considerations which should be mentioned. It was argued that when groups actually discuss issues that influence is consistent with the persuasive arguments explanation (i.e., informational influence). Since discussion is a common occurrence in natural groups, this is a serious challenge to the validity of normative influence. Thus, the question remains, if normative factors are indeed important determinants of attitude change within small group decision making groups, why so little evidence for normative influence was discovered. One reason may be that the methodological deck is stacked against such influence.

One factor which mitigates against normative influence is that group decision making is a context which mandates a good deal of cognitive processing and, therefore, generates informational influence. Group discussion may work to increase cognitive effort in two ways. First, group discussion may increase effort since members generally disclose their opinions (and arguments supporting that opinion). Second, group discussion may increase cognitive effort due to the nature of group discussion as a task. Specifically, not only must group members must attend, comprehend, elaborate, and integrate others' arguments (as in the passive communication context), but they must also encode and verbally present their own position and arguments. Put another way, not only must members cognitively counterargue, but verbally counterargue as well.

The methodological roadblock against normative influence is the near exclusive use of zero-history groups. That is, in the vast majority of cases, person are brought into the laboratory and placed into groups with others that

they may or may not know. The important point is not whether or not group members know one another but rather the extent to which they have functioned together as a group. This lack of group development implies that roles, norms, cohesiveness, conflict, and most importantly, conformity pressures have not had time to develop. Kaplan (1984) argues that

> "In most instances, groups are convened only for the instance of the experimental task, and so are mutual strangers. Normative influence may require existing or future relations between members in order to provoke motivational pressures to conform" (p. 408).

A famous example of group factors exerting normative pressures in group decision making is Janis' discussion of Groupthink (Janis, 1972). A vast majority of the symptoms of Groupthink as discussed by Janis (e.g. stereotyped views of opposing group leaders, conformity pressures, self-censorship, mindgaurds) require time to develop. Similar pressures and processes which may generate normative influence are unlikely to occur in the zero-history groups utilized in the small group decision making literature.

In addition, the homogeneity of group members is also likely to diminish any social comparison pressures. Festinger (1954) asserts that persons want to compare themselves to similar others. Since group members are generally homogeneous in age, experience, expertise, and social standing within the group, social comparison processes are not likely to distinguish group members by opinions alone (c.f., Isenberg, 1986).

Thus, in order to more accurately observe the influence of normative factors in small group decision making, a new approach to the study of groups is needed. In particular, either a group history or differences between group members should be present (see, e.g., Kirchler and Davis, 1986). This could

be performed either in terms of experimental manipulations or through the use of intact groups. It is in the use of intact groups where group member differences are likely to be particularly strong and salient to group functioning. It is only when this new approach is taken that both normative and informational influences can be investigated clearly.

Notes

1 For the remainder of this paper, the term polarization will be used to represent both group polarization and choice shifts.

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